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# Security Council

Fifty-seventh year

*Provisional*

**4490**th meeting

Wednesday, 13 March 2002, 10.30 a.m.

New York

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| *President:* | Mr. Kolby | (Norway) |
| *Members:* | Bulgaria | Mr. Tafrov |
| | Cameroon | Mr. Mbayu |
| | China | Mr. Wang Yingfan |
| | Colombia | Mr. Valdivieso |
| | France | Mr. Levitte |
| | Guinea | Mr. Boubacar Diallo |
| | Ireland | Mr. Ryan |
| | Mauritius | Mr. Jingree |
| | Mexico | Ms. Lajous |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Lavrov |
| | Singapore | Mr. Mahbubani |
| | Syrian Arab Republic | Mr. Mekdad |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Sir Jeremy Greenstock |
| | United States of America | Mr. Williamson |

## Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

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02-28405 (E)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation in Afghanistan**

**The President**: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Sir Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Sir Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to whom I give the floor.

**Sir Kieran Prendergast**: Before I begin this update, Mr. President, allow me say how pleased I am that we have with us Mr. Jean Arnault, whom the Secretary-General has appointed to succeed Mr. Francesc Vendrell as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Political Affairs for Afghanistan. He will leave shortly for Kabul, where he will have to deal first-hand with the complicated and fast-changing situation in Afghanistan, whose main elements I shall now try to describe.

The Interim Administration faces the substantial challenge of expanding its authority throughout the country. To date, its influence outside Kabul has been limited. Three major conferences in the last week, however, have brought important Afghan figures from the provinces to the capital, and they constitute a promising sign that a process of greater engagement between Kabul and Afghanistan's 32 provinces has begun.

The first meeting was convened to discuss the major security questions facing the country. It was attended by Ismael Khan, General Dostum and Atta Mohammad, as well as a senior representative of Abdul Karim Khalili and other commanders from around the country. Although the participants at the meeting embraced the principle of disarmament, the commanders expressed a reluctance to disarm and demobilize as long as remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda remained active. The conference established a commission, which agreed to send 200 men from each of Afghanistan's 32 provinces for the national army training courses, which the United States will run beginning in April. The commission plans to hold monthly meetings, and delegations from the commission will be sent to visit the regions.

The second conference, a meeting of governors, was held from 10 to 13 March. The Minister of the Interior, Mr. Yunus Qanooni, opened the conference with an agenda-setting speech calling for security and the rule of law, the establishment of a national police force, a war on drugs and terrorism and respect for the human rights of all ethnic groups. One of the aims of the conference was to obtain the governors' approval for a national political structure that tied the regions into the centre. At present, the absence of central authority, compounded by the delay in the payment of the salaries of civil servants in the provinces, means that the local police and administrations operate more or less independently of the capital.

The third conference, funded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and organized by the Afghan education ministry, brought together 91 Afghan educational experts from 26 provinces for a two-day seminar on the future direction of education in Afghanistan.

Two landmark events held in Kabul last week demonstrated the progress made and freedoms advanced in the field of gender equality and human rights since the fall of the Taliban regime. For the first time in 11 years, International Women's Day was celebrated in Kabul. More than 800 Afghan women from Kabul and the provinces, as well as from United Nations agencies, the donor community and non-governmental organizations, gathered to pay tribute to the courage of Afghan women. The celebration was held in the ruins of a theatre that had been burned down a few years ago only because it bore the name of a woman: Zainab, a prominent Afghan poet and intellectual.

The contribution of women to the war against terrorism was specifically recognized by Chairman Karzai, who referred to two Afghan women radio broadcasters who, through their daily reporting, had

demoralized Taliban soldiers. Mr. Brahimi emphasized peace as a precondition to restoring women's and girls' rights, while Dr. Sima Samar, Minister for Women's Affairs, called for the unity of women around the world and of Afghan women in the struggle against social injustice. Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, recognized the contribution of women who worked in various United Nations programmes, despite restrictions imposed by the Taliban, and highlighted several key priorities in support of women, including security, the rule of law, governance, women's economic security and poverty eradication.

The day after International Women's Day, the first Afghan national workshop on human rights was convened, bringing together representatives of the Interim Administration, the Loya Jirga Commission and civil society from around the country, to undertake joint planning for the implementation of the human rights provisions of the Bonn Accords and, most importantly, the establishment of a human rights commission. The workshop was opened by Mrs. Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Mrs. Robinson pledged technical and financial support for the establishment of the independent human rights commission, as well as for the activities of the various Afghan human rights working groups established at the national workshop.

The Loya Jirga Commission has continued to conduct extensive consultations. A visit to the Commission is now a central part of the itinerary of Afghan groups travelling from the provinces to Kabul to petition the authorities. Hundreds of people pass through the office each week. Widespread concerns continue to be expressed, however, about the possible impact of intimidation by authorities and armed groups on the loya jirga process. Nepotism and the abuse of patronage is widespread, and many Pashtuns, intellectuals and non-fighters are complaining that they have been sidelined.

Many visitors to the Commission say that they see the loya jirga as an opportunity for them to rejoin the political process. Feedback from Kandahar and the south-west of the country indicates that people there are ill-informed and feel excluded. As a result, members of the Commission, accompanied by United Nations staff, will soon be visiting that region and holding a series of mass meetings.

The Commission is working on the drafting procedures for the convening of the loya jirga and has just completed drawing up two detailed logistical plans, the first requesting help from the United Nations for the organization of indirect elections, and the second requesting support for the organization of the loya jirga meeting itself.

I would like now to turn to the security and military situation. Aside from the ongoing heavy fighting between coalition forces and Al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters in the south-eastern part of the country, the rest of Afghanistan remains relatively calm. However, the appearance of improving security conceals festering tensions beneath the surface. The power of armed groups is growing, and disarmament programmes in some areas amount to commanders disarming their enemies and rearming themselves. In the north, an uneasy peace exists between the Jumbesh and Jamiat factions. Both sides have been distributing arms. In the west there have been reports that the military are collecting unused ammunition and explosives to stock their arsenals. Several demining organizations have reported that local forces have confiscated explosives and ammunition that deminers were removing for destruction.

It is becoming more and more apparent that alternative sources of income need to be found for the mujahedin and the large number of armed men in Afghanistan. There is already evidence that soldiers have started to resort to crime. Many more say that they plan to do so in order to survive. They feel that they have no other options, and they see little evidence of a peace dividend that would provide them with an alternative to life by the gun.

This issue is being addressed at a number of levels. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) conducted meetings with key commanders in Kabul and with the Ministry of Defence with a view to developing a disarmament plan. It was recognized, however, that a longer-term study was necessary, and that whatever initiatives are undertaken must be synchronized with the training programme of the new national army. At the same time, preparations are being made by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Organization for Migration to undertake a mission to Afghanistan to assess the technical aspects of a demobilization and reintegration programme.

In the immediate term, the UNDP Recovery Employment Afghanistan Programme is about to begin. This programme, funded by the Japanese Government, will provide $3 million worth of labour-intensive public works projects in Kabul, and will employ more than 20,000 people for the next six months. We are very grateful to the Government of Japan for their generosity and vision.

As I noted, the questions of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration are linked to the issue of creating a national army. Ironically, initiatives on army training could have the unintended effect of causing new security problems, rather than solving existing ones, if soldiers not admitted into the army join informal armed groups that offer them money. This would worsen the already difficult problem for the Interim Administration of wresting power from autonomous commanders in the provinces.

Another key problem which needs to be addressed is the payment of salaries to the Afghan armed forces. No formal payments have been made, and it is still unclear how the units trained by ISAF and the United States will be paid.

Still with regard to security, the persecution of Pashtuns in the northern provinces and stories of physical and sexual abuse, extortion and the confiscation of lands and belongings are disquieting. Refugees from the area continue to arrive at the Pakistani border. The High Commissioner for Human Rights on her visit to Afghanistan last week heard first-hand from some of the victims. Both the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner joined the Chairman of the Interim Administration, Mr. Karzai, in condemning the attacks and called for the human rights of these communities to be respected. Chairman Karzai sent a special independent commission to visit the area, and they are expected to release their report shortly. Local authorities in the north have promised to act rapidly to put an end to the abuses.

As part of a series of ongoing diplomatic initiatives to tie Afghanistan into the international community, a meeting of the "six plus two" informal group on Afghanistan met at the ambassadorial level in Kabul on 11 March. As the Council knows, this group consists of the six countries that are contiguous to Afghanistan, plus the United States and the Russian Federation. It was a historic meeting, with Afghanistan, represented by Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah, attending for the first time. It was also the first time that the meeting of this group was held on Afghanistan's territory. The group expressed the renewed commitment of their respective Governments to supporting the efforts of the Interim Administration and the people of Afghanistan to establish security and reinforce peace and stability throughout the country. The group has decided to hold meetings on a monthly basis in Kabul.

I should like to turn for a moment to the question of police. The need to establish a national police force remains one of the highest priorities for the Interim Administration. The Interior Ministry has been very proactive, and the staff of the police academy have devised a national plan for police training. In addition to the two-week intensive training course for 3,200 new recruits — that is to say, 100 from each province — the plan includes a long-term training package for serving police officers. A two-day "train-the-trainer" course is being prepared by ISAF and the Ministry of the Interior. A donor conference on drug control and support for the Afghan police will take place in Berlin tomorrow and Friday, 14 and 15 March, and will be attended by the United Nations Special Mission for Afghanistan Police Adviser.

A word on the humanitarian situation. Humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan is increasing as the ability of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations to obtain access to people in need grows. Basic, life-saving tasks continue to demand the resources and time of the assistance community, even as the emphasis turns towards recovery and reconstruction needs.

The Interim Authority continues to stress the importance of immediate assistance. At a meeting of the Afghanistan .Support Group, on 4 March, four priority areas were identified: the nutrition crisis, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, mine action and the back-to-school programme.

Meanwhile, an earthquake struck Afghanistan on 3 March, affecting Kabul and three main areas: Samangan, Gulbahar and Badakshan. Aid agencies provided immediate assistance and facilitated the visit of Chairman Karzai and Mr. Brahimi to the worst-affected site, in Surkunda valley in Samangan. The earthquake triggered a landslide, which buried 100 houses and killed at least 70 people. The landslide also

blocked the river, creating flooding that threatened housing and an important road link. In addition, about 10,000 people living downstream are totally deprived of drinking water as a result. A technical team, assisted by ISAF, has been working since 5 March to stabilize the water level and reduce the flooding.

The United Nations is concerned by reports of widespread malnutrition in many drought-affected areas and areas hitherto inaccessible owing to security constraints. It is likely that many lives could be lost, especially those of children, if rapid action is not taken. While it is clear that the magnitude of the crisis would be substantially greater if this food aid had not been made available, the assistance community now needs to focus on more targeted assistance and support to the Government's efforts to resolve the crisis. A task force of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and the Ministry of Public Health is undertaking a series of emergency assessments in the districts where malnutrition has been identified.

With regard to refugees, following the implementation of the first stages of the Bonn process, UNHCR has begun a facilitated refugee return programme from Pakistan. Nearly 14,000 Afghans returned from Pakistan during the first week of this programme. This brings the total number of spontaneous and facilitated returns from Pakistan since the beginning of the year to between 50,000 and 70,000. Since the start of the year, more than 23,000 refugees have returned from Iran.

Assistance continues to be given to the 950,000 internally displaced persons spread throughout the country. Surveys indicate that many people prefer to delay their return home until the security or drought situation improves. However, in Kabul, 16,000 internally displaced persons living in the former Soviet compound have started to return to the Shomali plain area.

As a last but by no means least word, I am pleased to be able to inform the Council that we have received a draft of the Secretary-General's report, and the final version of it will be submitted to the Council next week.

**The President**: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussions on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 11 a.m.*